

Story 983 (1964 Tape
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contents
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Narrator: Rifat Cüre, in 50s

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of Kastamonu Province

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The Padişah's Three Sons and the Quest for the Golden Bird ^{Bird, ~~magu~~}

TEK
3 ~~Bird~~
Once there was and once there wasn't, when the camel was
a town crier and the tortoise was a maid, when I was rocking
my father's cradle, tingir mingir, there was a padişah who had
three sons. One day when the padişah and his sons were out
hunting, the padişah found the feather of a golden yellow bird
The padişah said, "If you are really my sons, you will bring
to me alive the bird from which this feather fell.

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Jash
As soon as they reached home, the young men began to pre-
pare to set out in search of the bird with the golden feathers.
They collected enough provisions and took enough money from the
royal treasury for a long trip, and then the three of them set
forth.

After they had traveled for a day, they came to a crossroad.
The roads to the left and to the right were marked "Safe for
Travel," but the road that lay straight ahead was marked "The

¹This nonsense jingle--in Turkish it rhymes--is a
traditional opening formula for a Turkish folktale. Tingir
mingir is onomatopoeia for the sound of a rocking cradle.

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Road of No Return." The eldest brother took the road to the right; the middle brother took the road to the left; and the youngest brother took the road straight ahead, the way labeled "The Road of No Return." There was a fountain alongside the junction, and near that fountain there was a large flat stone. Before they parted company, each brother took a ring from his finger and placed it beneath that stone. The eldest brother said, "Whoever returns first will recover his ring and then wait for the other two of us." Wishing one another good luck, they moved forth along the respective roads that they had chosen.

After he had ridden for some distance, the youngest brother came to a grassy plain. There he decided to dismount, eat something, and rest for a while. As he was eating, he was greeted by an old man who came along, "Selâmünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm," responded the youngest son, who then added "Father, for the love of Allah, please take some of this food and eat it."

Because the young man had said "for the love of Allah," the old man was obligated to take some of the food. "Hearty appetite! Have some more," said the son of the padişah

But the old man ate nothing more. He asked the prince, "Why are you making this journey? You are traveling along the Road of No Return."

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The youngest son then explained his quest to the old man. "While we were hunting, my father found a golden yellow feather on the ground. He requested his sons--I have two older brothers--to find the bird that dropped that feather and to bring that bird back alive to him. We are now searching for that bird, and we shall continue to search until one of us finds it.

"But that will be a very long trip, one which your horse may not be able to endure," said the old man. He wished to help the prince whose food he had eaten. "I can make it possible for you to reach your destination, where you will find the bird that you seek, but you will have to leave your horse here." When the youngest son decided to follow the old man's advice, the old man said, "Now climb on my back and close your eyes." (This old man was Hızır.²) ~~13, 74, 76~~ 73 80

Climbing on the old man's back, the prince closed his eyes, as he had been directed. When he opened his eyes again, he found himself in a place where there were many young birds with golden yellow feathers walking about. The old man said, "Please take only one of these birds.

right," said the prince. At first he took just one

²Hızır is a saint who has among his functions granting wishes, saving people (usually at the very last minute) from disaster, and acting as a messenger and agent of God's will. Old and white-bearded, he is often mistaken for a dervish.

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bird, but then he decided to take two more, one for each of his brothers. But these were magic birds, and their loss immediately detected by their owners. These owners rushed upon the prince and took him at once into the presence of their padişah.

That ruler asked the youngest son, "Why did you come here?"

"I came to get one of these birds in order to please my father."

"We shall give you one of these birds if you can first, bring us the special horse owned by such-and-such a tribe. In fact, we shall give you a whole cageful of these birds if you will do that."

"All right, I shall do it," said the prince

After he had started traveling in the direction of the territory of such-and-such a tribe, the youngest son met Hızır again. "What is the matter?" asked the old man.

"Well, I decided to take along two additional birds for each of my brothers, but the troops of the padişah seized me. The padişah promised to give me a whole cageful of those birds if I could manage to bring them a horse from such-and-such a tribe. I have accepted their offer and agreed to do this."

Hızır then said, "If I had not had a morsel of your food in my stomach, I should have nothing to do with you. You

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disregarded my good advice. But now I shall help you again. Climb on my back."

They went to the place of the tribe that owned the special horse. There they saw the horse grazing in the center of a pasture surrounded by hundreds of soldiers on watch. It seemed impossible for anyone to steal a horse in such a situation.

Alone Hızır then said, "Untie the horse's halter and lead it away, but take neither the horse's saddle nor its saddlebag from the ground. The soldiers are all asleep, and they will not see you take the horse, but if you take the saddle and the saddlebag, they will all awaken immediately.

The young man walked quietly into the pasture and untied the halter of the horse. But as he was about to lead it away, he glanced at the saddle and saddlebag lying near it on the grass. They were so beautiful that he could not resist them. He said to himself, "I might as well take these too," but just as soon as he touched them, the guards all awakened and captured him. Taken into the presence of the padişah of that tribe, he was asked to explain why he had attempted to take the horse, its saddle, and its saddlebag

"I was sent to do this by the padişah of such-and-such a land. If I could take the horse to him, then he would give me a golden yellow bird which my father desired."

The padişah then said, "I shall let you have this horse

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if you can bring me the great beauty who lives with a certain nearby tribe. Do that and you will receive not only the horse but also its saddle and saddlebag."

The young man agreed to undertake this task. He left the presence of the padişah and returned to where Hızır awaited him. Hızır asked him, "What has happened, young man?" The prince explained the agreement he had made to bring the beauty of a nearby tribe in exchange for the special horse. Because Hızır was still indebted to the young man for the morsel of food he had received from him, he decided to help him still further. "Climb on my back, and I shall take you to the girl of the nearby tribe.

When the girl heard what he had come for, she answered, "If you can do what I ask of you, I shall surrender myself to you and go anywhere you wish to take me." She then drew her sword and cut a nearby soldier into pieces with it. She then said to the prince, "If you can restore this soldier to life and make him whole again, I shall go with you any place you wish." She then walked away.

The prince drew from his sash two hairs. These had
given to him by Hızır, who had told him, "If you are in great
difficulty and need immediate assistance, rub together these
two hairs, and I shall come to you instantly." The young man
now rubbed together the two hairs, and when Hızır appeared,

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he explained to the old man his need to have the mutilated soldier restored to life and made whole again. Hızır restored the slain soldier to his previous condition and then disappeared as quickly as he had come.

When the beautiful girl returned and found the slain soldier alive and well, she asked the prince, "How did accomplish this?"

But the prince answered, "That was not part of our bargain I fulfilled my part of the bargain. Come now and fulfill your part."

As the two were leaving the territory of that tribe, Hızır appeared to the young man, saying, "Let me take you and the girl to the tribe owning the special horse so that you claim that animal and then exchange it for the bird you seek for your father."

"But Hızır Father, I cannot surrender this girl for any horse, for I have fallen in love with her."

Hızır tried and tried to persuade the prince to change his mind about this, but the young man refused to take his advice in the matter. Hızır was annoyed with him, but then Hızır remembered the morsel of food which he had accepted from the young man's hands, and so he decided to continue his assistance.

"Very well," he said. Then after changing himself into an exact likeness of the beautiful girl, he added, "You can now



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exchange me for the special horse, but in doing so, be sure not to give away my wooden sandals."

When the prince presented Hızır in the form of the girl to the padişah who owned the special horse, the ruler was well pleased. But he insisted on having along with the "girl" wooden sandals which she was wearing at the time. Since prince could not persuade the padişah to forgo the sandals, he gave these too in order to get the horse

After the prince had departed with the horse, the "girl" delivered to the padişah went into the toilet room and departed through a window. After escaping in this way, Hızır returned to his own form and went to the prince and said, "Now take horse to the owner of the golden yellow birds and exchange it for the cageful of birds you were promised."

But the prince said, "Oh, Hızır Father, I have come to like this horse so much that I cannot bear to give it away!"

"Don't cause me so much difficulty, young man!" Hızır said, but then remembering his indebtedness to the prince for food, he decided to assist him still further. He therefore turned himself into a horse that looked exactly like the special horse that the prince had acquired. "Now take me," he said, "and trade me for the birds--but do not give away my bridle!"

The prince agreed to this and took the horse to the

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padişah in the land of golden birds. "Here is the horse you wanted, your Majesty. Now give me the cageful of golden birds." The padişah kept his promise to do this, but he insisted on having the horse's bridle with the horse. (Ever since that time when people in Turkey have sold horses, they have always given the buyer the bridle with the horse. They never give just the horse but always the horse plus its bridle.)³

After the young man had departed with the birds, attendants of the padişah put the feedbag on the special horse. As the horse ate, it gradually began to disappear into the feedbag until it finally vanished.

Rejoining the young man, Hızır said to him, "You have now acquired the girl, the horse, and the birds. My assistance to you has now come to its end."

"Good luck to you, Hızır Father!"

"But I shall travel back with you as far as the place where we first met."

They mounted and rode to the place where they had formerly eaten together. There the prince recovered his own horse, and there the two men shared another meal together. shortly after the old man had finished eating, he became ill.

³Is there really such a custom in Turkey? If so, could it possibly have originated in this or a similar tale?

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His condition worsened rapidly, and it was not long before he died. Mindful of all that the old man had done for him, the prince dug a good grave for him. After they had cried over him for some time and then buried him, the prince and the girl continued their journey toward the young man's land.

Along their way they encountered a fox. This animal addressed them, saying, "O sons of men, take this ring, and when you are in trouble, just lick it, and you will receive the help that you need." This was, in fact, Hızır Father himself who had returned to do them one final favor in gratitude for what the prince had done for him when he had died.⁴

When the prince reached the junction where he and his brothers had parted company, he found all three of their rings beneath the flat rock beside the fountain. Recovering his own ring, he left the other two buried there.

Three or five months⁵ had passed since the three brothers had taken their different routes from that spot, but he was

⁴Hızır was immortal, and so he could not really die. He was apparently testing the prince's gratitude, determining how he would behave. Decent burial is, almost universally, one of the great imperatives. Several ATON tales--see, for example, Nos. 928, 940, 951--include exactly the same test.

⁵In Turkish parlance three or five is an idiomatic expression meaning a few or several.

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committed to remaining in that area until he was rejoined by the others. They then rode to a nearby city and there rented an apartment. The prince then went to a bakery to buy some bread, but when he looked at the attendant there, he suddenly realized that the man was his own brother, but the youngest brother did not identify himself to his middle brother. This middle brother had used up all the money he had received from his father's treasury and had been forced to take a job in a bakery in order to survive. The youngest brother bought some bread and said, "Please deliver this to such-and-such an apartment."

He then moved along until he came to a helva⁶ shop. There he bought a kilo of helva and asked to have it too delivered to his apartment. When he looked closely at the man weighing the helva, he discovered that this was his other brother, the oldest of the three. The oldest brother did not recognize him, however, and he did not then identify himself

It so happened that as the two older brothers were delivering the bread and the helva, they met each other on the street. The oldest brother said to the middle brother, "Where are you going?"

⁶A confection made of sesame oil, some kind of flour or ground cereal, and either honey or syrup. It is a great favorite among sweetmeats in Turkey.

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"I am going to such-and-such an apartment to deliver bread."

"That is the same place that I am going to," said the oldest brother.

are you going there?"

"I am going there to deliver helva," said the oldest brother.

When they knocked on the door of the youngest brother's apartment, the beautiful girl came to the door. "What do you want?" she asked

husband has sent bread and helva here," they said. As they were delivering these purchases, they looked through the apartment door and saw flying about inside several of the kind of bird that their father wanted.

did these birds get here?" one of them asked the girl.

son of such-and-such a padişah had them brought here," said the girl.

"Where is he now?" asked the other brother.

"Oh, he is the young man who bought this bread and this helva," she said.

The youngest son always gave some of his food to a ~~cat~~ ^{cat} and a ~~dog~~ ^{dog} which he had befriended. Reaching home, he gave portions of the bread and helva to these animals. Then,

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entering the selamlık,⁷ he found his brothers awaiting him. After greeting them and embracing them, he said, "I have found what our father wanted, the golden yellow bird, and in doing so, I have acquired a special horse and a very beautiful girl, I intend to marry."

The three brothers now returned to the junction where they had taken leave of each other. The nearby fountain no longer flowed, but they found a well which they hoped had water in it. The oldest brother said, "Let one of us go down into this well to see if there is water in it. If there is, he can bring some up to us." They all agreed that this was the wise thing to do, but the oldest brother said, "I cannot go down."

The middle brother said, "I cannot go down either."

But the youngest brother said, "I shall go down."

The older brothers tied a rope around the waist of the youngest brother and lowered him into the well. When he reached the bottom of the well, his older brothers cut the rope and left him there. Taking the girl with them, they then proceeded on home, where they said, "Here you are, Father. We have found the bird you wished and have brought back not just one of the golden yellow birds but a whole cageful. We have

⁷The selamlık is the section of the house reserved for males only.

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also brought home a special horse and a very beautiful girl " Well pleased with their success, the padişah made arrangements for the marriage of his oldest son to the beautiful girl they had brought home. He ordered his attendants to prepare a wedding ceremony of music and dancing and feasting that would last for forty days and forty nights.

While all of this was going on, the youngest son lay moaning at the bottom of the well, but the dog and the cat which he had befriended became aware of his situation, and every day they brought bread and helva to the mouth of the well and threw them down to him. This food kept him alive

After a while the young man remembered the magic ring which the fox had given to him. Taking this ring from his sash, he licked it, as he had been instructed to do. Immediately two large Arabs⁸ appeared and asked, "What is your wish?"

"Take me up out of this well," said the youngest brother.⁹ Back on the surface of the earth again, he walked to the bakery and the helva shop where his brothers had worked. He

⁸In Turkish tales, supernatural helpers who appear upon command are usually either jinns or Arabs, the latter often pictured as Negroes.

⁹The well episode here is very simple and brief. When protagonists are thrown into or left in "wells," it is usually the beginning of a set of adventures in the underworld. Returning to the upper world is usually a great problem for the protagonists, but here the hero simply licks a ring and is brought to the upper world in the twinkling of an eye by magic.

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discovered from the owners that his brothers had left their work in these two shops without even saying goodbye. They behaved very badly. Although they had been treated quite well, they had been most ungrateful.

Licking the magic ring again, the youngest brother ordered the two Arabs to bring him a horse and sword. Strapping on the sword and mounting the horse, he then rode to his father's land disguised as a keloçlan.¹⁰ 85-89

The beautiful girl about to be married to the oldest brother could not avoid the wedding but she thought of ways to delay it until the youngest son might possibly return. First she demanded a dress whose cloth had never been cut with scissors nor sewn with a needle. The padişah had town criers announce his wish to have someone make such a dress, but of course no one dared to undertake such a difficult job. When no one volunteered to make the dress, the padişah summoned his own tailor and said to him, "You will make a dress for my future daughter-in-law, and you will make it precisely as she had described it."

¹⁰ Literally a bald boy, a keloçlan is a child or young man suffering from the ravages of ringworm infestation of the scalp. The keloçlan is usually shown as dirty and ragged, often homeless. To disguise oneself as a keloçlan, one covers his hair with an animal skin in order to give oneself the appearance of baldness.

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The youngest son had heard the announcement of the town criers, and he had later heard about the order given to a certain tailor by the padişah. Going to that tailor, the young man asked to be hired as his apprentice.

"Son, do not bother me now when I am in the midst of all this trouble. Go away, or I shall knock you down!"

"Perhaps I can be of some use to you."

"What could you do? Here is what the padişah wants. He wants a dress for his future daughter-in-law, a dress whose cloth has never been cut with scissors nor sewn with a needle. Could you help me with that? If I do not deliver such a dress to the padişah by tomorrow, I shall be executed."

"Yes, I can make such a dress for you, but before I start it, you must provide me with half a petrol can¹¹ of hazelnuts." As soon as he had received the nuts, the youngest son shut himself in a small room in the tailor shop. Licking the ring, he said to the Arabs who appeared, "I want a dress that has not been cut with scissors or sewn with a needle, and I want this dress folded down so carefully that it will be fitted into

¹¹The term used here is teneke, a five-gallon, square-cornered can of the type used for decades by British Petrol for shipping small quantities of gasoline. Well-tinned and durable, but very light in weight for their size, such cans were prized by Turkish peasants as containers for all kinds of things, especially foods. Usually the top is cut out of the can.

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a hazel nut shell. As soon as the dress had been delivered by the Arabs, the young man spent the rest of the night shelling and eating the hazelnuts in the petrol can

In the morning the master tailor came to his newest apprentice and asked, greatly agitated, "Have you finished the dress, son?"

"Yes, I have," and the young man handed the tailor the hazelnut shell containing the special dress.

Looking at the nut, the tailor exclaimed, "Stop joking! How can you joke in this way when I may be executed?"

"Tailor Father, this is no joke. The dress, made exactly as you described it, is made of such fine cloth and folded so carefully that it fits easily inside this hazelnut shell.

The tailor could not believe what he heard, but he had no choice now but to take the nut to the padişah. When he and the padişah opened the shell of the hazelnut, there came out of it a dress that had neither been cut with scissors nor sewn with a needle.¹²

When the beautiful girl saw this dress, she knew immediately

¹²Almost all variants of this tale type contain the demand for such a dress. The dress is almost always produced by some agency of magic and almost always delivered in either a hazelnut or walnut. This may not be entirely clear to the narrator here, for there is no real purpose in his having the disguised prince provided with a great quantity of hazelnuts. If Arab magicicans or supernatural figures can produce such an impossible dress, they do not have to be supplied with a nutshell in which to pack it!

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the youngest son had escaped from the well and that he must be somewhere close to the palace. To be certain, however, she now demanded as a condition for her marriage to the oldest prince a golden tray on which a pack of golden hounds were chasing a golden rabbit.¹³

Again the padişah had town criers announce his wish to have this special gift made, but again no one dared to undertake it. The padişah finally had to summon to his presence

finest goldsmith in the land and order him, upon pain of death, to construct the golden objects desired. "You will construct a golden tray on which a pack of golden dogs are chasing a golden rabbit. Deliver this to me within two weeks, or I shall have you beheaded."

By this time the youngest son of the padişah had left his job at the tailor shop. When he heard the town criers' announcement of the padişah's wish for a golden tray upon which golden dogs chased a golden rabbit, the youngest prince went to the most skillful goldsmith in the city and requested to become his apprentice. The goldsmith did not believe that

¹³This is not a matter of engraved dogs and rabbit. This is meant to be an automaton, a piece of ingenious mechanical gadgetry, in which the dogs actually move in pursuit of a fleeing rabbit. Throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance there were many such automata discussed and several actually produced. Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful" is based on this tradition.

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his unknown keloğlan apprentice could make the marvelous desired, but no one else had agreed to produce it, and his two weeks' time had almost expired. He therefore decided to let the keloğlan try to construct the golden tray.

Locked in a separate room in the goldsmith's shop, the prince pretended all night to be hammering out the golden objects--tak, tak, tak. But these things were provided by the Arabs who appeared after he had licked the magic ring. The next morning the goldsmith took the golden tray and its golden animals to the palace and delivered them to the padişah. As soon as the padişah saw the toy, he ordered the wedding ceremony to commence at once.

On the first day of the wedding festivities there was to be a cirit¹⁴ game held. All of the shops in the city were closed that day so that everyone could attend the game. The master goldsmith said to his keloğlan apprentice, "Come! us go and watch the cirit game."

The prince answered, "Oh, Master, I am just a keloğlan. What business would I have attending a cirit game? I am only

¹⁴A Turkish game dating from antiquity, cirit is comparable to jousting in medieval European tournaments. Contestants threw spears or javelins at each other as they rode back and forth on their horses. It is still played in Turkey but not with sharp weapons. Blunted or pad-tipped sticks are the weapons instead of spears or javelins.

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a keloğlan, and I might get run down by one of the horses.

"All right! As you wish, son," said the goldsmith, and he went alone to watch the game.

As soon as his master had left the shop, the keloğlan licked the ring, and when the Arabs appeared, he said, "I want you to bring me a good horse, a set of armor, and a spear." When these arrived, the prince strapped on the armor mounted the horse, and, with spear in hand, rode to the playing field. There he played against several contestants and finally engaged his older brother in cirit. He played so well against that elder brother that the bridegroom died of his wounds. He then returned at once to the goldsmith shop, dismissed his horse, and put on his keloğlan disguise again.

A short while later his master returned and said, "Keloğlan, what a remarkable game you missed. A stranger entered the game, and he played so well that he killed the padişah's oldest son! Now the second son will marry the beautiful girl that they brought home from their travels.

"All of that does not matter to me, Master."

Now that the girl was going to be forced to marry the middle brother, she decided to delay the wedding, just as she had delayed the start of the wedding to the oldest brother. She also wanted more assurance that the youngest brother was still alive. Saying, "I cannot properly wear the dress I

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was wearing when the first bridegroom was killed," she demanded another dress of the same kind, one not cut with scissors nor sewn with a needle.

As soon as the youngest prince heard of this new demand by the girl, he returned to his job at the tailor shop. There he again provided the required dress with the help of the two Arabs summoned by the magic ring.

When the tailor delivered the second dress to the palace, the padişah was pleased with it. Once again, he ordered that the wedding ceremonies should be started.

The next day there were again to be cirit games to mark the beginning of the festivities. The tailor said to the youngest prince, "Keloğlan, why don't we go to the cirit games to be held today as part of the wedding ceremonies?"

"Master, that is no place for a keloğlan like me. You had better go alone and leave me here to clean up the shop." As soon as his master had gone and the youngest prince was left alone, he called the Arabs and said, "Bring me my horse, my armor, and my spear again."

Riding to the cirit field, the youngest prince once again engaged in the games there. When he played against his brother, he killed him as quickly as he had killed the oldest brother. He then made himself known to his father and revealed all that had happened on the quest to find the golden yellow

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bird. The beautiful girl now dared to speak out without fear of death at the hands of the elder brothers, and confirmed everything that the youngest prince had reported to his father. The padişah then said, "Son, it is clearly your right to marry this girl

After a wedding ceremony that lasted for forty days and forty nights, the youngest prince and the beautiful girl were married. They lived together very happily at the palace, and years later when the padişah died, this prince became the new padişah.